

Before the  
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of	)	
	)	
WTB Seeks Comment on CMRS	)	WT Docket No. 06-17
Market Competition	)	DA 06-62

**REPLY COMMENTS  
OF THE  
NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION**

The National Telecommunications Cooperative Association (“NTCA”) submits these reply comments in response to the above referenced *Public Notice*<sup>1</sup> in which the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau (“WTB” or “Bureau”) solicits data and information in order to evaluate the state of competition among providers of CMRS for its Eleventh Annual Report and Analysis of Competitive Market Conditions with Respect to Commercial Mobile Services. NTCA is a national association representing more than 560 rural telecommunications providers. While NTCA’s members are all rural incumbent local exchange carriers, most provide their rural communities with a broad array of telecommunications services, including wireless service.

In their comments in this proceeding, CTIA-The Wireless Association (CTIA) cited the results of NTCA’s 2005 Wireless Survey<sup>2</sup> of its member companies. CTIA correctly noted that the average respondent to the NTCA survey indicated they were facing competition from between 2 and 5 other carriers. CTIA uses this and other

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<sup>1</sup> *Public Notice* WTB seeks comments on CMRS Market Competition, WT Docket No. 06-17, DA 06-62 (released January 18, 2006) (*Public Notice*).

<sup>2</sup> *NTCA 2005 Wireless Survey Report*, available online at [ntca.org](http://ntca.org).

information to ultimately conclude that “[w]ith multiple service providers available to effectively all Americans...the wireless industry...is clearly delivering effective competition, and competitive benefits, to consumers.”<sup>3</sup> CTIA seems to have misconstrued the findings of NTCA’s Wireless Survey.

While the average NTCA wireless survey respondent indicated that they faced competition from between 2 and 5 wireless providers, that does not necessarily mean that the average rural customer has a choice of between 2 and 5 providers. Survey respondents were asked if they faced competition anywhere within their service area. Many competitors, however, only serve the more populous portions of the small carrier’s territory—such as small towns—or along highways that run through the territory. Those customers who don’t live in town or along the highway don’t have the option to take service from the larger carrier, and thus don’t realize the full benefits of competition.

Further, while it is true—as CTIA notes—that NTCA has made note of the fact that “many rural customers have access to the same state-of-the-art technologies available to their urban counterparts,”<sup>4</sup> it is far from clear that this is due to healthy wireless competition in NTCA members’ service territories. It is also due to other, less tangible factors—such as the fact that many of NTCA members are cooperatives, and thus owned by their customers, who can exert some influence over the services that the telco will offer. In reality, impediments to competition—such as larger carriers hoarding spectrum or refusing to allow smaller carriers access to spectrum in secondary markets—are

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<sup>3</sup> Comments of CTIA In the Matter of Implementation of Section 6002(b) of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993, Annual Report and Analysis of Competitive Market Conditions With Respect to Commercial Mobile Services, WT Docket No. 06-17, February 17, 2006, at 34.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 25.

preventing many rural Americans from receiving the same services available to non-rural Americans.

NTCA reiterates the points it made in its initial comments in this proceeding, specifically that the Commission must make a greater effort to ensure that small carriers have access to wireless spectrum and that large carriers must either make use of the wireless spectrum to which they have obtained rights, or make the spectrum available to other carriers who are willing and able to provide CMRS service to rural America.

Respectfully submitted,

NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION

By: /s/ Richard J. Schadelbauer  
Richard J. Schadelbauer  
Economist  
703 351-2019

/s/ Jill Canfield  
Jill Canfield  
703 351-2020

Its Attorney

4121 Wilson Boulevard, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Arlington, VA 22203  
703 351-2000

March 6, 2006

## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Gail Malloy, certify that a copy of the foregoing Reply Comments of the National Telecommunications Cooperative Association in WT Docket No. 06-17, DA 06-62 was served on this 6th day of March 2006 by first-class, United States mail, postage prepaid, or via electronic mail to the following persons.

/s/ Gail Malloy

Gail Malloy

Chairman Kevin J. Martin  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW, Room 8-A201  
Washington, D.C. 20554  
[Kevin.Martin@fcc.gov](mailto:Kevin.Martin@fcc.gov)

Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW, Room 8-B115  
Washington, D.C. 20554  
[Deborah.Tate@fcc.gov](mailto:Deborah.Tate@fcc.gov)

Commissioner Michael J. Copps  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW, Room 8-A302  
Washington, D.C. 20554  
[Michael.Copps@fcc.gov](mailto:Michael.Copps@fcc.gov)

Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW, Room 8-C302  
Washington, D.C. 20554  
[Jonathan.Adelstein@fcc.gov](mailto:Jonathan.Adelstein@fcc.gov)

Best Copy and Printing, Inc.  
445 12th Street, SW  
Room CY-B402  
Washington, D.C. 20554  
[fcc@bcpweb.com](mailto:fcc@bcpweb.com)

Bruce D. Jacobs, Esq.  
David S. Konczal, Esq.  
Jarrett S. Taubman, Esq.  
Pillsbury Winthrop, Shaw, Pittman LLP  
2300 N Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20037

Jennifer A. Manner, Vice President,  
Regulatory Affairs  
Mobile Satellite Ventures Subsidiary LLC  
10802 Parkridge Boulevard  
Reston, VA 20191

Michael Altschul, Senior Vice President  
and General Counsel  
Christopher Guttman-McCabe, Vice  
President, Regulatory Affairs  
Carolyn W. Brandon, Vice President,  
Policy  
Robert F. Roche, Ph.D., Vice President,  
Research  
CTIA-The Wireless Association  
1400 Sixteen Street, NW  
Suite 600  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Robert L. Mauer, CEO  
RSA 1 Limited Partnership  
404 Howland Street  
Emerson, Iowa 51533

Keith Kindle, Subsidiary Manager  
Texas RSA7B3  
102 North Stephens Street  
Quitman, TX 75783

James H. Barker, Esq.  
Barry J. Blonien, Esq.  
Latham & Watkins LLP  
555 Eleventh Street, NW  
Suite 1000  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Robert J. Irving, Jr., Senior Vice  
President and General Counsel  
Leap Wireless International, Inc.  
10307 Pacific Center Court  
San Diego, CA 92121

Sherry Stegall, Vice President  
Cellular South, Inc.  
125 South Congress Street  
Suite 1000  
Jackson, MS 39201-3303